



# Glossary

of Humanitarian  
**Terms** in relation  
to the Protection of  
Civilians in Armed  
Conflict

Office for the  
Coordination of  
Humanitarian Affairs  
Policy Development  
and Studies Branch  
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OCHA

# Glossary

## of Humanitarian Terms in relation to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

The terms and definitions in this glossary have been assembled with a focus on their common usage and understanding within a humanitarian context, particularly as relating to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. As such, the definitions provided do not necessarily reflect the position of the United Nations or its Member States.

The document was prepared through a broad and lengthy consultation process within the United Nations system, with extensive reference to the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance, Implementation Group on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

It is hoped that this glossary serves as a practical reference guide to terms often used within humanitarian situations, and that it will be reviewed and updated periodically.

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\* The definitions used in this document have been prepared from a humanitarian perspective and do not necessarily reflect the position of the United Nations or its Member States.

# Glossary

of

## Humanitarian Terms

## **Accountability:**

Individuals and groups being held responsible for their actions. In particular, ending impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of human right or humanitarian law, through justice and truth-seeking mechanisms, such as, the International Criminal Court, Ad hoc tribunals, special courts and tribunals, truth commissions and national courts. [See 'Impunity', 'International Criminal Court', 'Restorative Justice' and 'Transitional Justice']

## **Amnesty:**

A legal guarantee that exempts a person or group of persons from liability for criminal or political offenses. It is contrary to international law for perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity to be granted amnesty from criminal prosecution. [See 'Crimes Against Humanity', 'Genocide' and 'War Crimes']

## **Armed Conflict:**

A dispute involving the use of armed force between two or more parties. International humanitarian law distinguishes between international and non-international armed conflicts.

- **International armed conflict:**  
**A war involving two or more States, regardless of whether a declaration of war has been made or whether the parties recognize that there is a state of war.**
- **Non-international armed conflict:**  
**A conflict in which government forces are fighting with armed insurgents, or armed groups are fighting amongst themselves.**

[See 'Geneva Conventions' and 'International Humanitarian Law']

## **Arms Control:**

Any plan, arrangement, or process, resting upon explicit or implicit international agreement, governing the numbers, types, and characteristics of weapon systems or the numerical strength, organization, equipment, deployment, or employment of armed forces.

### **Armed Group:**

An armed non-state actor engaged in conflict and distinct from a governmental force, whose structure may range from that of a militia to rebel bandits.

### **Arms Embargo:**

A bilateral or multilateral policy prohibiting the movement of weapons into or out of a country.

### **Asylum:**

The granting, by a State, of protection on its territory to persons from another State who are fleeing persecution or serious danger. A person who is granted asylum may be a refugee. A person who has left her country of origin and has applied for recognition as a refugee in another country and whose request or application for refugee-status has not been finally decided by a prospective country of refuge is formally known as an asylum-seeker. Asylum-seekers are normally entitled to remain on the territory of the country of asylum until their claims have been decided upon and should be treated in accordance with basic human rights standards. [See 'Non-Refoulement', 'Refugee' and 'Refugee Law']

### **Biological Weapons:**

A weapon of mass destruction based on pathogenic biological agents. It may include ammunition loaded with biological agents (e.g. missile warheads, bombs, tube or rocket artillery ammunition) and their delivery systems.

Biological warfare is the intentional use of disease-causing micro-organisms or other entities that can replicate themselves (e.g. viruses, infectious nucleic acids and prions) against humans, animals or plants for hostile purposes. It may also involve the use of toxins: poisonous substances produced by living organisms, including micro-organisms (e.g. botulinum toxin), plants (e.g. ricin derived from castor beans) and animals (e.g. snake venom). If they are utilized for warfare purposes, the synthetically manufactured counterparts of these toxins are biological weapons.

## **Chemical Weapons:**

As defined by Article II of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction:

“Chemical Weapons” means the following, together or separately:

- A Toxic chemicals and their precursors, except where intended for purposes not prohibited under this Convention, as long as the types and quantities are consistent with such purposes;**
- B Munitions and devices, specifically designed to cause death or other harm through the toxic properties of those toxic chemicals specified in subparagraph (A), which would be released as a result of the employment of such munitions and devices;**
- C Any equipment specifically designed for use directly in connection with the employment of munitions and devices specified in subparagraph (B).**

## **Child Soldier:**

For the purposes of prevention, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, a child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who is compulsorily, forcibly, or voluntarily recruited or used in hostilities by any kind of armed forces or groups in any capacity, including but not limited to soldiers, cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. It does not, therefore, refer exclusively to a child who is carrying or has carried arms. [See ‘Recruitment’ and ‘DDR(R)’]

## **Civil Military Coordination (CMCoord):**

The dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from coexistence to cooperation. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training. [See ‘UN Military and Civil Defence Assets’]

## **Civilian Personnel:**

UN non-military staff members who form part of a peacekeeping operation and perform duties, among other things, relating to the human rights, humanitarian or political situation on the ground, and the financial and administrative management of a mission. [See 'Peacekeeping Operation']

## **Civilian Populations:**

Groups of unarmed people, including women, children, the sick and elderly, refugees and internally displaced persons, who are not directly engaged in the armed conflict. [See 'Internally Displaced Person' and 'Refugee']

## **Civil Society:**

Refers to structures independent from governments such as non-governmental organizations and human rights groups, independent activists and human rights defenders, religious congregations, charities, universities, trade unions, legal associations, families and clans. Domestic civil society represents one of the most critical sources of humanitarian assistance and civilian protection during humanitarian emergencies. [See 'Non-Governmental Organization']

## **Cluster Bombs:**

Canisters containing numerous small explosive devices or submunitions (bomblets, grenades, anti-personnel or anti-vehicle mines) that open in mid-air, scattering tiny shards of steel over a wide area. The explosives may be delivered by aircraft, rocket, or by artillery projectiles. Depending on the type, the submunitions are activated by an internal fuse, and can detonate above ground, at impact, or in a delayed mode. The failure rate for cluster munitions has been placed between 5%-30%. Failed munitions remain on the ground and may explode with the slightest touch, when picked up, stepped on or kicked. These munitions become less stable and therefore more dangerous with each passing year. [See 'Explosive Remnants of War', 'Mines' and 'Unexploded Ordnance']

## **Code of Conduct:**

A common set of principles or standards that a group of agencies or organizations have agreed to abide by while providing assistance in response to complex emergencies or natural disasters. For example, the Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Response Programmes, and the IASC Core Principles of a Code of Conduct for Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. [See 'Inter-Agency Standing Committee', 'Sexual Abuse' and 'Sexual Exploitation']

## **Coercion:**

The use of force, or the threat of force, to persuade an opponent to adopt a certain pattern of behaviour that is against their wishes.

## **Combatant:**

A person who takes an active part in hostilities, who can kill, and who, in turn, is a lawful military target. S/he can be a member of the armed forces, other than medical personnel and chaplains, or of an organized group. Under international humanitarian law, armed forces are subject to an internal disciplinary system, which, *inter alia*, must enforce compliance with the rules of international law applicable to armed conflict. [See 'International Humanitarian Law']

## **Complex Emergency:**

A multifaceted humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires a multi-sectoral, international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programme. Such emergencies have, in particular, a devastating effect on children and women, and call for a complex range of responses.

## **Conciliation:**

A process or method of helping the parties to a conflict to reach agreement. [See 'Conflict Resolution']

## **Conflict Prevention:**

Measures to avert violent conflict and put in place the means to resolve future disputes non-violently. Strategies for prevention fall into two categories: operational prevention, which refers to measures applicable in the face of immediate crisis, and structural prevention, which consists of longer term measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, that they do not recur. These activities are generally conducted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, and include preventative deployments of forces, fact-finding missions, consultations, warnings, inspections and monitoring.

## **Conflict Resolution:**

The resolution of conflict usually by conciliation. [See 'Conciliation' and 'Mediation']

## **Contingency Planning:**

A management tool used to ensure that adequate arrangements are made in anticipation of a crisis. This is achieved primarily through engagement in a planning process leading to a plan of action, together with follow-up actions.

## **Crimes Against Humanity:**

The Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court holds that acts including, murder, rape, torture, enslavement, enforced disappearances and other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health, are crimes against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systemic attack directed against any civilian population. These crimes are reinforced by treaties and customary international law. [See 'International Criminal Court' and 'Customary International Law']

## **Customary International Law:**

International norms derived from a general and consistent practice of States followed by them out of a sense of legal obligation (*opinio juris*), rather than from formal expression in a treaty or legal text. Despite not being written, such norms are legally binding on all States with the exception of States who are 'persistent objectors'.

## **Days of Immunization:**

A specified period of ceasefire agreed upon by parties to an armed conflict during which humanitarian agencies are granted access to immunize civilian populations. [See 'Temporary Ceasefire']

## **Days of Tranquility:**

A specified period of ceasefire agreed upon by parties to an armed conflict during which humanitarian agencies are granted access to assess the needs of and provide life-saving assistance to civilian populations. [See 'Temporary Ceasefire']

## **DDR(R):**

Programmes to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants in a peacekeeping context as part of a peace process, which usually include the following components:

- **Disarmament:**

**The collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. It includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.**

- **Demobilization:**

**The process by which armed forces (government and/or opposition or factional forces) either downsize or completely disband, as part of a broader transformation from war to peace. Typically, demobilization involves the assembly, quartering, disarmament, administration and discharge of former combatants, who may receive some form of compensation and other assistance to encourage their transition to civilian life.**

- **Reintegration:**

**Assistance measures provided to former combatants that would increase the potential for their and their families' economic and social reintegration into civil society. Reintegration programmes could include cash assistance or compensation in kind, as well as vocational training and income-generating activities.**

## **Also:**

- **Resettlement:**

**The settlement of ex-combatants in locations within their country of origin or to a third country.**

- **Repatriation:**

**The return of ex-combatants to their country of origin.**

- **Rehabilitation:**

**The treatment through psychosocial counseling and other programs of ex-combatants, most typically ex-child soldiers, who have been traumatized by war to assist them in resuming a more normal life.**

[See 'Peacekeeping Operation']

## **Displacement:**

Forcible or voluntary uprooting of persons from their homes by violent conflicts, gross violations of human rights and other traumatic events, or threats thereof. Persons who remain within the borders of their own country are known as internally displaced persons. Persons who are forced to flee outside the borders of their state of nationality or residence for reasons based on a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds identified in the 1951 Refugee Convention or to flee conflict in the case of States Parties to the 1969 OAU Convention or 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees are known as refugees.

[See 'Internally Displaced Persons' and 'Refugees']

## **Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC):**

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs also carries the title of Emergency Relief Coordinator. In this role, the ERC coordinates the international response to humanitarian emergencies and disasters.

[See 'Inter-Agency Standing Committee' and 'Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator']

## **Ethnic Cleansing:**

Refers to the practice of an ethnic group in military control of a territory seeking to remove members of other ethnic groups through tactics intended to instill a sense of fear, including random or selective killings, sexual assaults, confiscation or destruction of property in order to create ethnically pure enclaves for members of their group.

## **Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance (ECHA):**

One of the four Committees created by the Secretary-General in 1997 in the framework of the UN reform with the aim of enhancing the coordination between UN agencies in various fields. Chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs / Emergency Relief Coordinator and composed of executives at the highest level, including the political, peacekeeping and security departments, ECHA meets on a monthly basis in New York to share perspectives on humanitarian crises and issues, and on this basis, inform and advise the Secretary-General. [See 'Emergency Relief Coordinator']

## **Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS):**

In January 1997, four Executive Committees were established in the main sectoral areas of the UN's work - peace and security, humanitarian affairs, development, and economic and social affairs - with human rights as a cross-cutting theme in all committees. The Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS) was intended as "the highest policy development and management instrument within the UN Secretariat on critical, cross-cutting issues of peace and security". The ECPS is convened by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping serves as the alternate convenor. The committee traditionally meets twice a month, primarily to discuss country situations. The ECPS also guides and receives reports from the Framework for Co-ordination (also known as the Framework Team), which is the inter-departmental entity dealing with preventive action.

## **Explosive Remnants of War (ERW):**

A collective term for explosive devices left after a period of conflict. ERW have been divided into four major threat areas:

- **Mines and unexploded ordnance contamination on the ground;**
- **Abandoned armoured fighting vehicles;**
- **Small arms and light weapons, including limited ammunition and explosives in the possession of civilians and non-State actors; and/or**
- **Abandoned and/or damaged/disrupted stockpiles of ammunition and explosives.**

[See 'Cluster Bombs', 'Mines' and 'Unexploded Ordnance']

## **Family Reunification:**

The process of bringing together families, particularly children and elderly dependents, with previous care-providers for the purpose of establishing or re-establishing long-term care. Separation of families occurs most often during armed conflicts or massive displacements of people. [See 'Displacement']

## **Framework Agreement:**

A Framework Agreement is a negotiated agenda for 'Agreement in Principle' negotiations. It should identify the subjects for and objectives of the negotiations, and establish a timetable and the procedural arrangements for the negotiations. In the humanitarian context, a framework agreement often forms an important component of peace negotiations. For instance, a framework agreement was used by the UN to establish a political and humanitarian context for negotiation in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan. [See 'Negotiation']

## **Gender-Based Violence:**

Violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender or sex. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, or other deprivations of liberty. While women, men, boys and girls can be victims of gender-based violence, because of their subordinate status, women and girls are the primary victims. [See 'Sexual Abuse' and 'Sexual Exploitation']

## **Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols:**

The four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977 relating to the protection of victims in armed conflict are the principal instruments of international humanitarian law. Together, these instruments seek to limit the effects of armed conflict by protecting persons who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities, including wounded or sick military and naval personnel, prisoners of war, and civilian populations, and to restrict the means and methods of warfare. The four Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I apply during international armed conflicts between two or more States, whereas only Article 3 common to the four Conventions and Additional Protocol II apply during non-international or internal conflicts. As of March 2003, 190 States are party to the Geneva Conventions, 161 States are party to Additional Protocol I and 156 States are party to Additional Protocol II. These instruments are monitored principally by the International Committee of the Red Cross. [See 'Armed Conflict', 'International Humanitarian Law', 'Prisoner of War' and 'Protected Persons']

## **Genocide:**

As defined by Article II of the 1948 Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide:

**"Genocide" means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.**

[See 'International Criminal Court']

## **Gross Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms:**

While no agreed definition exists of the term "gross violations of human rights", it can be concluded that, at a minimum, these violations include genocide; slavery and slavery-like practices; summary or arbitrary executions; torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; enforced disappearance; arbitrary and prolonged detention; deportation or forcible transfer of population; and systematic discrimination, in particular based on race or gender. [See 'Genocide']

## **Host Communities:**

Communities that host large populations of refugees or internally displaced persons, typically in camps or integrated into households directly. [See 'Displacement', 'Internally Displaced Person' and 'Refugee']

## **Humanitarian Access:**

Where protection is not available from national authorities or controlling non-state actors, vulnerable populations have a right to receive international protection and assistance from an impartial humanitarian relief operation. Such action is subject to the consent of the State or parties concerned and does not prescribe coercive measures in the event of refusal, however unwarranted. [See 'Protection']

## **Humanitarian Assistance:**

Aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of a crisis-affected population. Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality, as stated in General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (19 December 1991). In addition, the UN seeks to provide humanitarian assistance with full respect for the sovereignty of States. Assistance may be divided into three categories - direct assistance, indirect assistance and infrastructure support - which have diminishing degrees of contact with the affected population. [See 'Humanitarian Principles']

## **Humanitarian Coordination:**

An approach based on the belief that a coherent response to an emergency will maximize its benefits and minimize potential pitfalls. In each country, the coordination of UN humanitarian assistance is entrusted to the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. OCHA, under the direction of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, is responsible for the coordination of a humanitarian response in the event of a crisis and carries out this role according to approved policies and structures set by the IASC. This coordination involves developing common strategies with partners both within and outside the UN system, identifying overall humanitarian needs, developing a realistic plan of action, monitoring progress and adjusting programmes as necessary, convening coordination forums, mobilizing resources, addressing common problems to humanitarian actors, and administering coordination mechanisms and tools. It does not involve OCHA in the administration of humanitarian assistance. [See 'Emergency Relief Coordinator' and 'Inter-Agency Standing Committee']

## **Humanitarian Engagement:**

The involvement of humanitarian agencies and organizations within a complex emergency to deliver protection, assistance and relief. [See 'Complex Emergency']

## **Humanitarian Information Centres (HIC):**

A semi-permanent facility established by OCHA in cooperation with other agencies and NGOs during a complex emergency that serves as an information and data resource and provides infrastructure and professional services to humanitarian organizations as they implement relief and rehabilitation projects.

## **Humanitarian Intervention:**

While there is no agreed upon international definition of "humanitarian intervention" yet, it is a doctrine generally understood to mean coercive action by States involving the use of armed force in another State without the consent of its government, with or without authorization from the UN Security Council, for the purpose of preventing or putting to a halt gross and massive violations of human rights or international humanitarian law. The UN's operations in Northern Iraq and Somalia, and NATO's operation in Kosovo have all been termed humanitarian intervention.

## **Humanitarian Operations:**

Operations conducted to relieve human suffering, especially in circumstances where responsible authorities in the area are unable or unwilling to provide adequate service support to civilian populations.

## **Humanitarian Operating Environment:**

A key element for humanitarian agencies and organizations when they deploy, consists of establishing and maintaining a conducive humanitarian operating environment, sometimes referred to as "humanitarian space". The perception of adherence to the key operating principles of neutrality and impartiality in humanitarian operations represents the critical means by which the prime objective of ensuring that suffering must be met wherever it is found, can be achieved. Consequently, maintaining a clear distinction between the role and function of humanitarian actors and that of the military is the determining factor in creating an operating environment in which humanitarian organisations can dis-

charge their responsibilities both effectively and safely. Sustained humanitarian access to the affected population is ensured when the receipt of humanitarian assistance is not conditional upon the allegiance to or support to parties involved in a conflict but is a right independent of military and political action. [See 'Humanitarian Assistance' and 'Humanitarian Principles']

### **Humanitarian Principles:**

As per UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (19 December 1991), humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Adherence to these principles reflects a measure of accountability of the humanitarian community.

- **Humanity:**

**Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable in the population, such as children, women and the elderly. The dignity and rights of all victims must be respected and protected.**

- **Neutrality:**

**Humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature.**

- **Impartiality:**

**Humanitarian assistance must be provided without discriminating as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion. Relief of the suffering must be guided solely by needs and priority must be given to the most urgent cases of distress.**

[See 'Humanitarian Assistance' and 'Humanitarian Operating Environment']

### **Humanitarian Worker:**

Includes all workers engaged by humanitarian agencies, whether internationally or nationally recruited, or formally or informally retained from the beneficiary community, to conduct the activities of that agency.

## **Humanitarian, United Nations & Associated Personnel:**

Includes the following groups of persons whose safety and security must be ensured during complex emergencies: Persons deployed by a humanitarian non-governmental organization or agency under an agreement with the UN Secretary-General to carry out activities in support of the fulfillment of the mandate of a UN operation; Persons engaged or deployed by the UN Secretary-General, whether as humanitarian personnel, members of the military, police or civilian components of a UN operation, or experts on mission; and Persons assigned by a Government or an intergovernmental organization with the agreement of the competent UN organ.

## **Human Rights:**

All human rights derive from the dignity and worth inherent in the human person. The concept of human rights acknowledges that every single human being is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights without distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Human rights are legally guaranteed by human rights law, which is expressed in treaties, customary international law, bodies of principles and other sources of law. Human rights law places an obligation on States to act in a particular way and prohibits States from engaging in specified activities, thereby clarifying and protecting formally the rights of individuals and groups. It is noteworthy that human rights law applies in peace and in war. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) together with the 1966 International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are known as the "International Bill of Rights". [See 'Customary International Law']

## **Human Security:**

A concept concerned with the security of individuals and promoting the protection of individuals' physical safety, economic and social well-being, human dignity, and human rights and fundamental freedoms. It reflects the growing recognition worldwide that concepts of security must include people as well as States.

## **Impunity:**

The impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of human rights violations to account - whether in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings - since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, prosecuted and, if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims. [See 'Accountability']

## **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC):**

A body established in June of 1992 in response to General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (19 December 1991) to serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance in response to complex and major emergencies. The IASC is chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and has the membership of all UN operational humanitarian agencies, with standing invitation to ICRC, IFRC, IOM, UNHCHR, the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs, the World Bank and the three NGO consortia (ICVA, InterAction and SCHR). The IASC meets at least twice a year to deliberate on issues brought to its attention by the ERC and the IASC Working Group (IASC-WG), which is formed by senior representatives of the same agencies and meets four to six times a year. The primary objectives of the IASC are:

- **To develop and agree on system-wide humanitarian policies;**
- **To develop and agree on a common ethical framework for all humanitarian activities;**
- **To advocate common humanitarian principles to parties outside the IASC;**
- **To identify areas where gaps in mandates or lack of operational capacity exist; and**
- **To resolve disputes or disagreement about and between humanitarian agencies on system-wide humanitarian issues.**

[See 'Emergency Relief Coordinator' and 'Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator']

## **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):**

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes or habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. A series of 30 non-binding “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement” based on refugee law, human rights law and international humanitarian law articulate standards for protection, assistance and solutions for internally displaced persons. [See ‘Displacement’, ‘Refugee Law’, ‘Human Rights’ and ‘International Humanitarian Law’]

## **International Criminal Court (ICC):**

A permanent court with jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute individuals accused of the most serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, namely genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Unlike the International Court of Justice, whose jurisdiction is restricted to states, the ICC considers criminal cases against individuals; and unlike the Tribunals for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia created to address crimes committed during these conflicts, its jurisdiction is not situation-specific and is not retroactive. The ICC was established by the Rome Statute, which entered into force on 1 July 2002, and is located in the Hague, Netherlands. [See ‘Crimes Against Humanity’, ‘Genocide’ and ‘War Crimes’]

## **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):**

A body of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare by prohibiting weapons that make no distinction between combatants and civilians or weapons and methods of warfare which cause unnecessary injury, suffering and/or damage. The rules are to be observed not only by governments and their armed forces, but also by armed opposition groups and any other parties to a conflict. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977 are the principal instruments of humanitarian law. IHL is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict, and is part of international law. It does not regulate resort to the use of force; this is governed by an important, but distinct, part of international law set out in the UN Charter. [See ‘Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols’]

## **International Law:**

A body of laws regulating relations between States

## **Last Resort:**

The principle that military force should only be relied upon once all viable non-military options for the prevention or peaceful resolution of a crisis have been reasonably exhausted, including negotiation, arbitration, appeal to international institutions, and economic sanctions.

## **Mandate:**

The legal framework that defines the responsibilities of UN Agencies, peacekeeping operations and other international organisations such as the International Committee for the Red Cross.

- The mandates of UN Agencies, such as UNICEF and UNHCR, are agreed upon by the General Assembly. It is imperative that Agencies have clear and adequate mandates to ensure that all humanitarian issues are addressed appropriately and consistently. The protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is one issue that does not fall squarely within any Agency's mandate. Until such time, it is OCHA's responsibility through the IDP Unit to collaborate with Agencies to ensure that IDP interests are protected. [See 'Internally Displaced Person']
- Peacekeeping Mission mandates are agreed upon by the Security Council. It is imperative that an authorized UN Force is sufficiently large, well equipped and appropriately empowered with matching resources for the situation called for on the ground.

## **Mediation:**

A process in which a third-party neutral acts as a facilitator to assist in resolving a dispute between two or more parties in an armed conflict. It is a non-adversarial approach to conflict resolution, where the parties generally communicate directly. The role of the mediator is to facilitate communication between the parties, assist them in focusing on the real issues of the dispute, and generate options for settlement. [See 'Conflict Resolution']

## **Millennium Declaration:**

A resolution adopted unanimously by the General Assembly following the UN Millennium Summit on 8 September 2000 (A/RES/55/2) that embodies a large number of specific commitments aimed at improving the fate of humanity in the 21st century. The key objectives identified in the Declaration are: Peace, security and disarmament; Development and poverty eradication; Protecting our common environment; Human rights, democracy and good governance; Protecting the vulnerable; Meeting the special needs of Africa; and Strengthening the United Nations.

## **Military Assistance:**

The use of military forces in humanitarian assistance missions during complex emergencies. Such assistance may take the form of military protection of humanitarian aid delivery, monitoring demobilization programs, providing logistics, arresting war criminals and protecting civilians.

## **Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA):**

As defined in the 1994 “Oslo Guidelines”, MCDA “comprises relief personnel, equipment, supplies and services provided by foreign military and civil defence organizations for international humanitarian assistance. Further-more, civil defence organization means any organization that, under the control of a Government, performs the functions enumerated in Article 61, paragraph (1), of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949”. When these assets are under UN control they are referred to as UN MCDA. [See ‘UN Military and Civil Defence Assets’]

## **Mines:**

A munition designed to be placed under, on or near the ground or other surface areas and to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person or vehicle. It may include ‘anti-personnel landmines’ and ‘mines other than anti-personnel landmines’.

- Anti-Personnel Landmines (APM):**

**A device primarily designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons. APM are indiscriminate in terms of target and time, as they continue to kill and maim people long after a conflict has ended.**

- **Mines Other Than**

#### **Anti-Personnel Landmines (MOTAPM):**

**Unlike APM, MOTAPM are designed to be triggered by the contact with or the proximity of a vehicle and to destroy vehicles and tanks. Like APM, MOTAPM retain their ability to function even years after they have been placed.**

[See 'Cluster Bombs', 'Explosive Remnants of War', 'Mine Action' and 'Unexploded Ordnance']

#### **Mine Action:**

Refers to all activities that aim to reduce the social, economic, and environmental impact on populations of landmines and other unexploded ordnance. The objectives of mine action are to reduce the risk from landmines and UXOs to a level where people can live safely; in which social, economic, health and environmental development can occur free from the constraints of landmines; and in which victims' needs can be addressed. UN mine action encompasses five complementary core components:

- **Mine awareness and risk reduction education;**
- **Minefield survey, mapping, marking, and clearance;**
- **Victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration;**
- **Stockpile destruction; and**
- **Advocacy to stigmatise the use of landmines and support a total ban on anti-personnel landmines.**

[See 'Mines']

#### **Minimum Necessary Force:**

The measured and proportionate application of coercion or violence, sufficient only to achieve a specific objective and confined in effect to the specific and legitimate target intended. [See 'Proportional Means']

#### **Negotiation:**

The deliberation which takes place between two or more parties regarding a proposed agreement. In the context of armed conflict, negotiations often relate to permitting humanitarian access, agreeing upon a ceasefire, or establishing peace through a framework agreement or peace accord. [See 'Framework Agreement' and 'Peacemaking']

### **Non-Discrimination:**

The principle that a measure of general protection for civilian populations against certain consequences of war is provided without any adverse distinction based, in particular, on race, nationality, religion or political opinion (e.g. the establishment of hospitals and safety zones and of neutralized zones, the protection of civilian hospitals and their staff, the free passage of relief supplies, etc.). Also, the principle under human rights law that States must undertake measures to respect and to ensure to all individuals within their territories and subject to their jurisdiction the rights recognized in the 1966 International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. This principle applies equally in times of peace as in times of war. [See 'Human Rights']

### **Non-Governmental Organization (NGO):**

An organized entity that is functionally independent of, and does not represent, a government or State. It is normally applied to organizations devoted to humanitarian and human rights causes, a number of which have official consultative status at the United Nations.

### **Non-Refoulement:**

A core principle of international refugee law that prohibits States from returning refugees in any manner whatsoever to countries or territories in which their lives or freedom may be threatened. This principle is a part of customary international law and is therefore binding on all States, whether or not they are parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention. [See 'Refugee Law' and 'Customary International Law']

### **Peace:**

Peace is a condition that exists in the relations between groups, classes or states when there is an absence of violence (direct or indirect) or the threat of violence.

### **Peacebuilding:**

The Statement by the President of the Security Council on Peacebuilding in 2001 (S/PRST/2001/5) holds that peacebuilding activities are aimed at preventing the outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflict and therefore encompass a wide range of political, developmental,

humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms. They require tailored short and long-term actions that focus on fostering sustainable institutions and processes in areas such as sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and inequalities, transparent and accountable governance, the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence.

### **Peacekeeping Operation (PKO):**

UN field operations that often consist of several components, including a military component, which may or may not be armed, and various civilian components encompassing a broad range of disciplines. Depending on their mandate, peacekeeping missions may be required to: deploy to prevent the outbreak of conflict or the spill-over of conflict across borders; stabilize conflict situations after a ceasefire to create an environment for the parties to reach a lasting peace agreement; assist in implementing comprehensive peace agreements; lead states or territories through a transition to stable government based on democratic principles, good governance and economic development. The UN enters into two types of agreements upon the establishment of a peacekeeping mission:

- **Status-of-Forces-Agreement (SOFA):**

**An agreement with the host country in whose territory the peacekeeping operation will be deployed, currently based on the Model SOFA adopted by the General Assembly in 1990 (A/45/594). The Model SOFA refers to the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations in according exclusive criminal jurisdiction to the sending State over military personnel of peace support operations. Accordingly, military personnel are immune from criminal prosecution by the host state for crimes committed on its territory, but may still be subject to the criminal jurisdiction of their national authorities. In comparison, where a civilian member of a peace support operation commits a crime, the SOFA leaves open the possibility of criminal proceedings by the host country. Both military and civilian personnel may be subject to civil liability by the host country. A SOFA is also known as a Status-of-Mission-Agreement (SOMA).**

- **Contribution Agreement:**

An agreement with the State sending or contributing personnel and equipment to the peacekeeping operation, currently based on the Model Contribution Agreement adopted by the General Assembly in 1991 (A/46/185). The Model Contribution Agreement outlines the troop size, equipment, type of force, etc. and other responsibilities of the troop contributing country. It also cross-references the Model SOFA, specifying that peacekeeping personnel shall enjoy the privileges and immunities provided for in the SOFA and that questions relating to jurisdiction over personnel for criminal offences and civil liability shall be settled according to the SOFA procedures. Furthermore, it provides that responsibility for disciplinary action with respect to military personnel made available by the participating State shall rest with that State, and that it shall keep the UN's Head of Mission informed regarding the outcome of such exercise of jurisdiction. Peacekeepers remain in their national service while a part of a peacekeeping operation, but are acting under the command and operational control of the UN, as exercised by the UN's Head of Mission.

### **Peacemaking:**

The use of diplomatic means to persuade parties in conflict to cease hostilities and to negotiate a peaceful settlement of their dispute, essentially through means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations. The UN can usually play a role only if the parties to the dispute agree to it. Peacemaking thus excludes the use of force against one of the parties to enforce an end to hostilities, an activity that in United Nations parlance is referred to as "peace enforcement". [See 'Negotiation']

### **Post-Conflict Transition:**

The tenuous period immediately following the termination of conflict during which humanitarian needs must still be met and programs such as those for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation and for rebuilding infrastructure remain at an early stage. This period may also involve the temporary transfer of government functions to a UN transitional administration, as occurred in Kosovo and East Timor. [See 'Transitional Administration']

### **Preventive Diplomacy:**

Action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.

## **Prisoner of War:**

A person belonging to one of several categories set forth in the 1949 Geneva Conventions, including members of the armed forces of a Party to a conflict or otherwise part of or attached to such forces, who has fallen into the power of the enemy and is guaranteed certain fundamental protections while in captivity. [See 'International Humanitarian Law', 'Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols' and 'Protected Persons']

## **Proportional Means:**

The scale, duration and intensity of the planned military intervention should be the minimum necessary to secure the defined human protection objective. [See 'Minimum Necessary Force']

## **Protected Areas:**

Areas designated by the UN to be demilitarized to protect civilians and facilitate circumstances for a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the conflict.

## **Protected Persons:**

Persons accorded protection under international humanitarian law, who take no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. [See 'International Humanitarian Law' and 'Civilian Populations']

## **Protection:**

A concept that encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of human rights, refugee and international humanitarian law. Protection involves creating an environment conducive to respect for human beings, preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring dignified conditions of life through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation. [See 'Human Rights', 'International Humanitarian Law' and 'Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict']

## **Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict:**

Structures and policies developed by the UN, States and other humanitarian actors, and based in international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law, to protect vulnerable populations from the effects of armed conflict, ranging from the most immediate priorities of minimizing civilian casualties to more long-term priorities of promoting the rule of law and security, law and order within a State [See 'Human Rights', 'International Humanitarian Law', 'Protection' and 'Refugee Law']

## **Recruitment:**

Encompasses compulsory, forced and voluntary recruitment into any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group. The conscripting or enlisting of children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities constitutes a war crime under the Rome Statute. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict prohibits direct participation in armed conflict of persons below 18 years and establishes a ban on their compulsory recruitment. [See 'Child Soldier' and 'International Criminal Court']

## **Refugee:**

A person, who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or for reasons owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge outside his country of origin or nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of his country of origin or nationality. [See 'Asylum', 'Non-Refoulement' and 'Refugee Law']

## **Refugee Camp:**

A plot of land temporarily made available to host refugees fleeing from an armed conflict in temporary homes. UN Agencies, particularly UNHCR, and other humanitarian organizations provide essential services in refugee camps including food, sanitation, health, medicine and education. These camps are ideally located at least 50 km away from the nearest international border to deter camp raids and other attacks on its civilian occupants.

## **Refugee Law:**

The body of customary international law and various international, regional, and national legal instruments that establish standards for refugee protection. The cornerstone of refugee law is the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Optional Protocol. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated by the UN to provide international protection to refugees and to seek permanent solutions to their problems through its Statute, adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1950.

## **Resident Coordinator (RC) and Humanitarian Coordinator (HC):**

The Resident Coordinator is the head of the UN Country Team. In a complex emergency, the RC or another competent UN official may be designated as the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). In large-scale complex emergencies, a separate HC is often appointed. If the emergency affects more than one country, a Regional HC may be appointed. The decision whether to and who to appoint as HC is made by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. In countries where large multi-disciplinary UN field operations are in place the Secretary-General might appoint a Special Representative (SRSG). The relationship between the SRSG and the RC/HC is defined in a note issued by the Secretary-General on 11 December 2000 (Note of Guidance on Relations Between Representatives of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators, dated 30 October 2000). [See 'Emergency Relief Coordinator' and 'Inter-Agency Standing Committee']

## **Responsibility to Protect:**

A concept that imposes a responsibility on the international community to protect a population that is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it. The 2001 Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) notes that the responsibility to protect encompasses three essential components:

- **The responsibility to prevent a human catastrophe by addressing root causes and direct causes of internal conflict and other man-made crises;**

- **The responsibility to react to an actual or apprehended situation of compelling human need, should one occur, with appropriate measures, which may include coercive measures such as sanctions, international prosecution and military intervention in extreme cases; and**
- **The responsibility to rebuild after the intervention through the provision of full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation.**

The responsibility to protect is founded on the obligations inherent in the concept of state sovereignty, the responsibility of the Security Council under Article 24 of the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, specific legal obligations under human rights and human protection instruments, international humanitarian law and national law, as well as in the developing practice of states, regional organizations and the Security Council. While this concept is under discussion, it has not yet been adopted by the UN. [See 'State Responsibility' and 'State Sovereignty']

### **Restitution:**

The concept that victims, their families or dependents, who have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws operative within Member States, should receive fair recompense. Such recompense should include the return of property or payment for the harm or loss suffered, reimbursement of expenses incurred as a result of the victimization, the provision of services and the restoration of rights. [See 'Restorative Justice']

### **Restorative Justice:**

A problem-solving approach to crime that focuses on restoration or repairing the harm done by the crime and criminal to the extent possible, and involves the victim(s), offender(s) and the community in an active relationship with statutory agencies in developing a resolution. The modes for delivering restorative justice include, but are not limited to, restitution of property, restitution to the victim by the offender, reparations and truth commissions. [See 'Restitution', 'Transitional Justice' and 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission']

## **Rule of Law:**

A governing principle by which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, and including the state itself, are accountable to democratically determined, publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated rules which are substantively and procedurally consistent with international law, particularly human rights standards, including the following:

- **Government decisions are made according to written law and rules;**
- **Government sanctions cannot be made up after the fact (ex post facto);**
- **Rules are applied as much as possible consistently to all; and**
- **Citizens are afforded consistent written process (due process) before life, liberty or property is taken away.**

## **Sanctions:**

Restrictions imposed by one or more countries upon another for political reasons. They may take a number of forms, of which economic and targeted sanctions are most common.

- **Economic Sanctions:**

**Restrictions on the international trade and finance of a country. Experience has shown that such measures can have devastating impacts on the civilian populations in countries under a sanctions regime.**

- **Targeted (or “Smart”) Sanctions:**

**Restrictions designed to impact on the elite in a given country in order to minimise effects on innocent civilians. They allow trade in unambiguously humanitarian goods and require centralized scrutiny of "dual-use" goods that can be used for both military and civilian purposes. Humanitarian exemptions would include food, medicines and clothing, whereas smart sanctions may include freezing leaders' overseas accounts, a strong arms embargo, and limitations on goods of value to weapons research.**

### **Sexual Abuse:**

Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. [See 'Gender-Based Violence' and 'Sexual Exploitation']

### **Sexual Exploitation:**

Any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. [See 'Gender-Based Violence' and 'Sexual Abuse']

### **Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW):**

As referred to in the Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (A/52/298), SALW are used by all armed forces, including internal security forces, for, *inter alia*, self-protection or self-defence, close or short range combat, direct or indirect fire, and against tanks or aircraft at relatively short distances. Broadly speaking, small arms are those designed for personal use and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew.

### **Smuggling in Persons:**

The voluntary transnational transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of migrants, often in dangerous or degrading conditions. [See 'Trafficking in Persons']

### **State Responsibility:**

The principle that states bear primary responsibility for the functions of protecting the physical security and lives of their citizens and promoting their welfare. During complex emergencies occurring within their territories, this includes initiating, organizing, coordinating, and implementing humanitarian assistance programs. State responsibility also means that national political authorities are responsible to the citizens internally and to the international community through the UN, and are accountable for their acts of commission and omission. This principle was recently reinforced by the International Law Commission in its final report on State Responsibility, adopted in 2001, as draft Article I of the report provides that: "Every internationally wrongful act of a State entails the international responsibility of that State". [See 'State Sovereignty' and 'Responsibility to Protect']

## **State Sovereignty:**

A concept that signifies the legal identity of states in international law and provides order, stability and predictability in international relations since sovereign states are regarded as equal, regardless of comparative size or wealth. Sovereignty is not a grant to states of unlimited power to do all that is not expressly forbidden by international law; rather, it entails the totality of international rights and duties recognized by international law.

The principle of sovereign equality of states is enshrined in Article 2.1 of the UN Charter and means that a sovereign state is empowered to exercise exclusive and total jurisdiction within its territorial borders without intervention from other states (principle of non-intervention). Membership of the United Nations is viewed as the final symbol of independent sovereign statehood and the seal of acceptance into the community of nations. Membership also entails responsibilities to the citizens internally and to the international community through the UN. 191 States are Members of the United Nations as of March 2003. [See 'State Responsibility' and 'Responsibility to Protect']

## **Temporary Ceasefire:**

The temporary cessation of hostilities by agreement between the warring parties. A ceasefire or armistice may be 'general', in which case hostilities cease throughout the theatre of war, or 'local', in which case there is only a partial cessation of hostilities. A general ceasefire often precedes a peace treaty. [See 'Days of Immunization' and 'Days of Tranquility']

## **Terrorism:**

While there is no agreed upon international definition of "terrorism" yet, it is a concept generally understood to mean a criminal act or acts intended to inflict dramatic and deadly injury on civilians and to create an atmosphere of fear, generally in furtherance of a political or ideological (whether secular or religious) purpose. Terrorism is most often carried out by sub-national or transnational groups, but it has also been known to be practiced by rulers as an instrument of control.

## **Trafficking in Persons:**

The 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime defines trafficking in persons as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”. Victims of trafficking have either never consented or their initial consent has been rendered meaningless by the coercive, deceptive or abusive actions of the traffickers. Trafficking can occur regardless of whether victims are taken to another country or only moved from one place to another within the same country. [See ‘Smuggling in Persons’]

## **Transitional Administration:**

A transitional authority often arising from a negotiated peace process and established by the UN Security Council to assist a country during a government regime change or passage to independence. It typically consists of three segments: (i) public administration including civilian police, (ii) humanitarian assistance, and (iii) UN Peacekeeping Force. Transitional administrations have been authorized in countries including East Timor (UNTAET) and Kosovo (UNMIK). [See ‘Post-Conflict Transition’]

## **Transitional Justice:**

As a political transition unfolds after a period of violence or repression, a society is often confronted with a difficult legacy of human rights abuse. The measures that need to be taken might involve both judicial and non-judicial responses to violations of human rights. These may include: prosecuting individual perpetrators; offering reparations to victims of state-sponsored violence; establishing truth-seeking initiatives about past abuses; reforming institutions like the police and the courts; and removing human rights abusers from positions of power. Increasingly, these approaches are used in combination to achieve a more comprehensive and far-reaching sense of justice. Each country situation is unique and therefore might need a different set of complementary measures. [See ‘Accountability’, ‘Impunity’, ‘Restorative Justice’ and ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission’]

## **Truth and Reconciliation Commission:**

A temporary body established and officially sanctioned to investigate and report on patterns of human rights abuses occurring over a period of time in a particular country or in relation to a particular conflict. Truth commissions are intended to provide a full accounting of past atrocities and an official acknowledgement of the corresponding suffering of victims, promote national reconciliation, bolster a new political order and/or legitimize new policies, and provide recommendations on how to prevent a recurrence of such abuses. To the extent that official truth is a step towards a full and inclusive national memory that allows the voices of the victims and survivors to be heard, a truth commission can be a crucial step towards addressing the needs of a transitional society.

It is noteworthy that truth commissions do not have the power to prosecute or punish perpetrators, make judicial pronouncements, or implement the reforms or reparations programs that they may recommend in their reports. Their implementation depends entirely on the will and interest of the political authorities. There have been over 20 truth commissions around the world over the past 25 years. [See 'Restorative Justice' and 'Transitional Justice']

## **UN Military and Civil Defence Assets (UN MCDA):**

Military and civil defence resources requested by the UN humanitarian agencies and deployed under UN control specifically to support humanitarian activities and military and civil defence resources that might be available. [See 'Military and Civil Defence Assets']

## **Unexploded Ordnance (UXO):**

An explosive weapon that has been primed, fused, armed or otherwise prepared for use or used. It may have been fired, dropped, launched, or projected yet remains unexploded, either through malfunction or design or for any other reason. Ammunition consists of artillery shells, artillery rockets or mortar, some of which can dispense submunitions; the warheads (simply known as carrier) are adapted to discharge their payload with a delay or proximity fuse function. Submunitions are bomblets or minelets that form part of a cluster bomb or artillery shell payload. A minelet is anything designed to be initiated by its victim. Bomblet is the term normally used to indicate a submunition containing a high explosive designed to detonate on impact or after short delay. [See 'Cluster Bombs', 'Explosive Remnants of War' and 'Mines']

## **War Crime:**

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines war crimes as grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, namely, any of the following acts against persons or property protected under the provisions of the relevant Geneva Convention, committed as part of a plan or policy or as part of a large-scale commission of such crimes, including:

- 1 Wilful killing;**
- 2 Torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments;**
- 3 Wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health;**
- 4 Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly;**
- 5 Compelling a prisoner of war or other protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power;**
- 6 Wilfully depriving a prisoner of war or other protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial;**
- 7 Unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement; and**
- 8 Taking of hostages.**

The Rome Statute holds that war crimes also consist of many other serious violations of the international laws and customs applicable in international and non-international armed conflicts, and enumerates a number of them, including intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population as such, against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities or against civilian objects. [See 'Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols' and 'International Criminal Court']



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